



Blind Pets



Causes of Vision Loss in Pets

Congenital

- Cataracts
- Double merle/dapple/harlequin
- Collie eye anomaly- recessive
- Retinal dysplasia
- Optic nerve underdevelopment
- Endothelial dystrophy
- Microphthalmia Syndrome in Portugese Water Dogs (MOS-PWD)

Acquired/Later Onset Vision Loss

Acquired/Later Onset Vision Loss

- Cataracts- secondary to diabetes mellitus, primary lens disease, genetic predisposition
- Neoplasia- in the eye or around the eye, central nervous system/brain
- Corneal dystrophy-
- Glaucoma- increased pressure in the eye, very painful, primary or secondary to other eye disease
- Uveitis (inflammation in the eye)
- Retinal Detachment
- Feline Herpesvirus
- SARDS- Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome-
- Progressive Retinal Atrophy (inherited, cavaliers, cockers, labs, goldens, rotties, springers)
- Dry eye with chronic ulceration and hyperpigmentation
- Infectious Disease- viral, bacterial, herpes virus in cats
- Trauma, Injury
- Hypertension

Diagnosing Blindness in Pets

DIAGNOSING BLINDNESS

Determine the cause of eye disease and vision loss

Signs of blindness: cloudy eyes, dilated or uneven pupils, bumping into things, disoriented, moving cautiously, acting nervous and anxious, not moving around at night

EYE EXAM

Start with local vet, may refer to an ophthalmologist for consult- history, full physical exam, detailed eye exam, bloodwork, ERG, other diagnostics.

- check eyelids for masses and foreign bodies
- check conjunctiva and 3rd eyelid for inflammation, masses, foreign objects
- corneas for ulceration and other abnormalities
- lenses for cataracts, position of lens
- retinas for detachment, changes in optic nerve, masses
- eye pressure- glaucoma
- Flourescein eye stain to detect corneal ulcers
- Schirmer tear test
- Ocular pressure
- ERG- electroretinogram, measures electrical activity of the retina
- Blood pressure
- Genetic Testing

Treatments

Varies with diagnosis, severity and prognosis of eye disease/condition, specific treatments are determined by the attending Veterinarian

Examples include:

- cataracts- surgery,
- glaucoma- meds to decrease pressure,
- ulcers- drops and ointments, corneal flap surgery,
- uveitis- anti-inflammatory meds, injury- meds, surgery,
- enucleation to relieve pain and prevent spread of cancer

Follow up with veterinarian for ongoing diagnostics, recommendations and treatment plans

Caring for Blind Dogs

things you need to know

- Can hear verbal cues and tone of voice.
- Also learn *tap and touch signals*.
- Training using food lure and clicker.
- Blind dogs miss important body language from other dogs. **Need supervision.**
- Can hear movement of other dogs, where a ball drops, outdoor sounds
- Mapping areas in house, outside, and other areas using sense of hearing, touch, and smell. **Supervise** to keep them safe.
- Variable ground coverings are helpful. Mats under food dishes, to help recognize location within a room or area inside or outside
- Gain familiarity with the environment over time. *Build on experiences.*
- Need to be **kept safe**- gates, outdoor fencing, leash, harness,
- Keep the home environment familiar and safe, but most pets are flexible and adjust to changes if made aware.
- **Muffin's Halo** and other brands are especially helpful for older dogs with cognitive changes who have trouble adapting to recent blindness.
- Some dogs have trouble adjusting to acute blindness- treat anxiety with meds and supplements and training

Muffin's Halo for Blind Dogs

A vest with a plastic rim that comes up over the head to act as a bumper for blind dogs

- Keeps blind dogs from hurting themselves when they bump into walls, furniture, and other obstacles.
- Increases confidence level when dogs realize they aren't going to hurt themselves.
- Especially helpful for older dogs that become disoriented easily.
- Some do better without the halo.



Older Blind Dogs

Older Blind Dogs

- Take time to adjust.
- Some lose sight gradually so they have time to adjust.
- Some lose sight acutely which makes it much more difficult to adjust and adapt
- Limiting their area in the house helps them adjust in the beginning. Expand the area as they become more comfortable.
- Floor coverings are very helpful as they use their sense of touch to identify ground coverings within the space. They learn to recognize where they are by the floor and ground coverings.
- **Safety is a priority-** gates, close doors, harness and leash outdoors and even in the house if needed.
- Can teach verbal cues along with touch signals, contact is helpful for anxious dogs.
- Manage concurrent systemic illness- very important
- Cognitive changes are common and can complicate adapting to blindness
- Blind cats do very well, adapt easily, keep safe. Keep indoors.
- Veterinary support for clients!

Links for Support

Link to webinar- Teaching Deaf, Blind, and Deaf Blind Dogs- click [HERE](#)

Check our [Disabled Pets Project YouTube Channel](#) for instructional videos about basic care and training of deaf, blind, and deaf blind dogs.

Support for pet parents with blind pets is [HERE](#).

Supplies for pet parents with blind pets is [HERE](#).

[**www.disabledpets.org**](http://www.disabledpets.org)

